

Minutes of the Professional Standards Committee, Friday December 7, 2007

Present: Bartanen, Christoph, Edgoose, Fields, Goldstein, Tomlin

The meeting was called to order at 11:05 AM

- 1) **Announcements:** There were none.
- 2) **Deferral of minutes of meeting of November 30** (the minute-taker was ill).
- 3) **Report on December 4 Faculty Meeting**
 - a. Tomlin reported that the role allocated to the Dean in streamlined reviews will not be transferred to an Associate Dean, as had been proposed. Instead, the Dean can designate an FAC member to read a streamlined file. This was understood to mean that different FAC members might read different files, and not that only one would read all such files. It was asked whether this new structure would introduce additional uncertainty for evaluatees, but Tomlin reported that this was discussed in the meeting and faculty felt that this change did not introduce any more uncertainty than exists with the current review structure.
 - b. There was also a report on issues emerging from the first reading of our proposed “housekeeping” *Code* amendment. Five of the proposed changes refer not to the *Code* itself but to the formal interpretations listed at the end of the document. Are these interpretations technically part of the *Code* or are they historical documents that relate to it? As such, can they be amended or only superseded by later interpretations? If the latter, should they still be listed if they refer to non-current versions of the *Code*? It was noted that the listing of interpretations at the end of the *Code* is not required by the *Code* itself. Moreover, interpretations follow a different path of approval (that, in some ways, gives them a more substantial standing than the *Code*) and can be subject to binding arbitration in the event of a disagreement between the faculty and Trustees (Chapter I, Part G Section 1). Could an interpretation reached by such arbitration be subject to the *Code* amendment process, thereby opening a back-door route to undoing an unpopular settlement?

In addition, it was noted that some of the changes included in our proposed amendment (such as the shift from “spouse” to “partner”) might not be seen by all as mere “housekeeping” issues, and might be viewed as more substantive, either in terms of the issues they raise or the consequences of the change.

The PSC was anxious not to get into the question of the status of interpretations in the *Code*. It was suggested that the five proposed amendments should be removed from the list and addressed (where necessary) with subsequent interpretations. Some proposed changes (such as typos) might well be too minor to warrant such action. This would keep the PSC from establishing a precedent that it can alter interpretations through the Code amendment process.

This discussion also raised broader questions about the ways that we view the *Code* and its amendments, both philosophically (should interpretations with no currency to the current *Code* still be listed somewhere?) and textually (should hyperlinks or footnotes be used – as we suggested in the amendment motion?).

The PSC responded positively to the suggestion that we get legal consultation for help on these questions, and on the question of the alteration of interpretations fixed by arbitration.

4) **Charge #5 – The evaluation of 3 year visiting faculty.**

The subcommittee that addressed this change circulated suggested text for the Buff Document to address these reviews:

Evaluation of Visiting Faculty

For those visiting faculty members whose appointment continues beyond the second year, an evaluation normally occurs at the end of the second year. The evaluatee prepares a file of teaching performance and evidence and the head officer reviews the file and writes a letter. These materials are forwarded to the Dean who reviews the file and writes a letter for the evaluatee and sends a copy to the head officer. Chapter II, Section 5 of the *Faculty Code* authorizes the university to determine not to reappoint faculty without tenure for any reason not forbidden by the *Code*.

This review process thus resembles a streamlined review, and this has been the common practice across the University for some time, although the reviews have typically occurred at the end of year 3. The PSC was not ready to commit to this new wording. Questions raised in the discussion included:

- Is it worth requiring a full file review, or should the review be handled like the current year 1 and year 2 reviews, by the head officer alone? It was suggested that one possible value of a file review is the chance for more feedback on teaching. (It was noted that visiting faculty do not have required year 1 and year 2 reviews, although these do occur in some departments.)
- Why should these reviews be scheduled at the end of year 2? Would second semester evaluations be in? If not, was it worth the extra effort for only one semester of evaluations since the prior year's evaluation? One advantage of this timing is that it allows for replacements to be hired in plenty of time, should the review

not be a positive one. While it was agreed that the fall of the third year is the time that allows for two semesters of reviews and enough time for rehires (if necessary), this is the busiest time for other reviews and might not be the best use of faculty and administrators' time.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m. with these questions unresolved.

Submitted respectfully,

Julian Edgoose